

**An archaeological evaluation  
on Kell Field,  
Petches Yew Farm,  
Finchingfield, Essex  
June-July 2005**

**report prepared by  
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**commissioned by  
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on behalf of  
Apol Silva & Orchards Ltd**



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## 1 Summary

*An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching was carried out on Kell Field, Petches Yew Farm, Finchingfield, Essex in June-July 2005 in response to the planned construction of a reservoir. Initially, five evaluation trenches were machine-excavated within the proposed footprint of the reservoir. Later, a sixth evaluation trench was excavated on another area of the site to evaluate an alternative location for the reservoir. A concentration of Roman flue tiles and roof tiles was observed on the field surface in the south-east part of the site. This proved to be the site of a Roman building with a mortared flint foundation. A spread of Roman demolition material, adjacent to the wall foundation and incorporating flue tiles and opus signinum mortar, may be filling the lowered area of a hypocaust base. The spread of Roman tiles and an absence of archaeological features east of the identified building probably indicates the site of another Roman building although probably of timber construction. A disturbed line of tile and flint nodules within this area could represent a wall line. One or two tile tessera cubes indicate a tessellated floor, though no floor levels were recorded other than the possible hypocaust base. Beyond the area of the Roman building and across the whole site were numerous ditches which suggest a long period of occupation. Only a limited amount of excavation was carried out; however, it is clear that the ditches are primarily of Roman date, and probably most if not all represent compounds around settlement rather than field ditches. Pottery from the ditches, mostly recovered from the surface of the features, spans the Roman period, and sherds of Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age date demonstrate later prehistoric settlement on the site.*

## 2 Introduction (Figs 1-3)

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on Kell Field, Petches Yew Farm, Finchingfield, Essex.
- 2.2 The site is situated just north-east of Waltham's Cross, located between the villages of Wethersfield and Great Bardfield (Fig 1).
- 2.3 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in relation to a planning application (no BTE/017/05) for the construction of a reservoir on the site.
- 2.4 The work was commissioned by Mr Alan O'Leary on behalf of Apol Silva & Orchards Ltd.
- 2.5 The proposed site of the reservoir is located on Kell Field of Petches Yew Farm, and the proposed reservoir itself covers an area of some 8250 square metres, centred on NGR TL 7006 3060 (Fig 2).
- 2.6 The site is a small field which is not cultivated at present. The land slopes gently down toward the north-east. The north-east end of the field flattens out onto the broad valley floor of the River Pant which is located only a short distance to the north-east.
- 2.7 The client has reported that the field which comprises the site is usually quite damp, although, following the dry winter and recent dry weather, the site is unusually dry. It is also reported by the client that there are several springs to the south of the site.
- 2.8 When the site was first visited by a CAT archaeologist, a dense spread of Roman building material (roof tiles, flue tiles and mortar fragments) with some Roman pottery was apparent, covering the south-east part of the site (Fig 3), and similar Roman finds could be easily recovered in smaller quantity from all parts of the site. The type and quantity of Roman finds immediately suggested that this was the site of a Roman building and that below-ground archaeological features were likely to be common across the site. However, with no other clear option for the location of the reservoir, the clients (Mr Alan O'Leary on behalf of Apol Silva & Orchards Ltd) decided to continue with the evaluation to see what the trenches would reveal.
- 2.9 The work was carried out by CAT between the 23rd June and 4th July 2005.

- 2.10** As expected, a large number of archaeological features was exposed by the evaluation trenches. In light of this, it was agreed with Vanessa Clarke of the Essex County Council (ECC) Historic Environment Management (HEM) group that only limited excavation need take place to provide characterisation for a few of the features (Trenches 1-5).
- 2.11** It was also agreed with the client that a further trench (Trench 6) should be opened on the north-east part of the site to evaluate that area with a view to relocating the proposed reservoir (Fig 2). This new trench revealed a similar density of features of Roman date in the north-east part of the site, though no structural remains were encountered.
- 2.12** All fieldwork was done in accordance with a written scheme of investigation submitted by CAT (Holloway 2005) which followed a brief which was supplied by the ECC HEM group. The project was monitored by Vanessa Clarke of the ECC HEM group.
- 2.13** This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CM 2002) and *Guidelines for the deposition of archaeological archives with Colchester Museums* (CM 2003), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IFA 2001). Other sources are *Management of archaeological projects* (MAP 2), and *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment* (EAA 3), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy* (EAA 8), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14).

### **3 Archaeological background** (Fig 1)

- 3.1** Prior to the evaluation, there were no recorded archaeological finds from Kell Field of Petches Yew Farm.
- 3.2** There are a few records of archaeological finds in the immediate surrounding area. There are extant earth banks (Essex Heritage Environment Record or EHER no 1506) running through Lodge Wood (TL 693 302), west of the site, which are thought to represent part of a Roman road. Also a stone coffin (EHER no 1505; TL 696 305), found west of the site, is thought to be Roman in date.
- 3.3** A little further away, to the east of the site, Roman pottery (EHER no 6833) is recorded from the west side of Wethersfield village (TL 709 312).

### **4 Aim**

The aim of the fieldwork was to establish and record the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any archaeological remains likely to be affected by the construction of the reservoir.

### **5 Methods** (Figs 1-2)

- 5.1** Five trenches (Trench 1 or T1-T5), each 1.7m wide, were excavated by machine, approximating to 220 m of trenching. This equated to 4% of the reservoir footprint. Another trench (T6), 55 m long, was opened to evaluate another area. A toothless ditching bucket was used. This work was carried out under archaeological supervision. The trenches were positioned to achieve an even spread across the site.
- 5.2** The trenches were excavated into the natural undisturbed soil below the modern cultivated topsoil, or just into the undisturbed soil to help to define any archaeological features.

- 5.3 Liaison was maintained with the ECC HEM group monitoring officer (Vanessa Clarke) to maintain an appropriate strategy to investigate deposits on the site.
- 5.4 All exposed subsoil features, archaeological deposits or negative features were photographed and examined in sufficient detail to allow their nature, date and importance to be assessed.
- 5.5 Each trench and any features located within it were planned using a total station, and a plan of the trenches and the surrounding boundaries was also made using the total station.
- 5.6 Individual records of features were entered on CAT pro-forma recording sheets. Section drawings of layers were made at a scale of 1:50 or 1:20 (depending on the archaeological importance of the context).
- 5.7 Finds were registered on CAT pro-forma record sheets and assigned find numbers according to context. Finds were washed, marked with the site code number, and bagged according to context. Roman pottery was examined by CAT archaeologist Stephen Benfield and Middle Iron Age pottery by Paul Sealey of Colchester Museums.
- 5.8 Colour photographs of the main features, sections, the general site and the site environs were taken with a digital camera.
- 5.9 Metal-detecting of the spoil heaps was conducted for T1-T5.

## 6 Results (Figs 3-4)

### 6.1 Trench 1: summary

The trench (40 m long) was located on the west side of the site. There were three features interpreted as being ditches (F25, F32, F33). F25 was aligned south-west to north-east, while F32 and F33 appeared to run approximately east-west. Of a group of features in the middle area of the trench, two (F27 & F29) appeared to be archaeological. A small number of finds recovered from the surface of these features were all of Roman date. The remaining features (F26, F28, F30, F31) appeared to be possibly natural in origin.

### 6.2 Trench 2: summary

The trench (25 m long) was located in the north-west part of the site. The ground at the north end of the trench was quite damp, and, on excavation, the north end of the trench began to fill with shallow water to about 8 m along its length from the north end. The topsoil at this north end of the trench also produced a number of modern finds (bricks and concrete) and was the only area of the site which produced any significant quantity of modern finds at all. Two features (F23 & F24) were located, both of which are interpreted as being ditches. Both were aligned south-west to north-east. A small number of finds recovered from the surface of these features were all of Roman date.

### 6.3 Trench 3: summary

The trench (55 m long) was located on the central part of the site. At the south end of the trench was part of a Roman wall foundation (F1) made of flint nodules in a very pale (whitish) mortar (Plates 1-2). Immediately south of the wall foundation was a spread of Roman demolition material (L1; Plate 3). That this survives below the modern cultivation level suggests that it is filling a feature sunk into the ground such as a hypocaust base. Three other features were located. Just north of the wall foundation F1 was a small pit or post-hole with a charcoal-flecked fill (F6). To the west of the foundation F1 was a ditch (F2) which appeared to have cut the Roman demolition layer L1, and probably the wall foundation F1 (Plate 3). A small section was excavated through this feature (Fig 4, Sx 1) which produced a small quantity of finds of Roman date including a small sherd of Dressel 20 amphora. Much of the north end of the trench was occupied by a large feature with a dark silt fill (F3), the surface of which was littered with fragments of Roman tile. This appears to be either a large ditch or possibly a quarry hollow. A piece of molten lead (find bag 35) was recovered from the upper surviving fill. Also an unusual tile with what appear to be ventilation holes came from spoil from the area of F3 (find bag 36). This unusual tile is undated but is thought to be post-medieval. A machine bore

(Fig 3, borehole 1) into the centre area of F3 (made by the client) indicated a base in the central area of the feature at about 0.7 m-0.8 m below the bottom of the evaluation trench. A second machine bore (Fig 3, borehole 2) confirmed that the feature became more shallow toward its north edge.

#### **6.4 Trench 4: summary**

The trench (85 m long) was located in the east part of the site. A number of features (F4 & F7-F22) were identified, all in the northern half of the trench, the south half being unusually quite devoid of any cut features. Across the central area of the trench was a narrow spread of Roman tile fragments and flint nodules (F4) which may be the remains of a wall foundation (Plates 4-5). All of the remaining features in the trench lay to the north of F4. There were approximately between four and six ditches (F7, F8, F9, F18, F21, F22). All of these features share a north-east to south-west alignment except for the large feature F22, the edge of which was aligned south-west to north-east. The size of F22 could indicate a quarry-pit or hollow. A sherd of Middle Iron Age pottery and a rim sherd of Late Iron Age pottery (both find bag 9) came from the surface of this feature. Three of the numbered ditches (F7, F8, F9) were all intercut on the same alignment. Limited excavation of F7 and F8 showed that these could be separate re-cuts on the line of a wider earlier ditch F9 (Fig 4, Sx 3). Only the base of F8 was reached, and the surviving feature was about 0.4 m deep below the bottom of the evaluation trench. Roman pottery of later 3rd- to 4th-century date and a sherd of blue-green Roman glass were recovered from the fill of F8. The small quantity of Roman pottery excavated from F7 was of 2nd- to 3rd-century date. Of four discrete pit-like features (F16, F17, F19, F20), only one (F19) appeared to be a certain archaeological feature as it contained oyster shell in its exposed surface. However, F16 had the visual appearance of a real archaeological feature with a medium brown silt fill. F17 and F20 both had the appearance of natural features.

#### **6.5 Trench 5: summary**

The trench (25 m long) was located on the east side of the site. Seven features were exposed in its base. There were three, possibly five, ditches (F5, F10, F11, F12, F13), and two possible pits (F14, F15). All of the ditches were aligned north-east to south-west except F10 which was aligned approximately east-west. A section was excavated through F5 (Fig 4, Sx 2). The feature proved to be about 0.7 m deep below the base of the evaluation trench and produced Roman pottery of later 2nd- to 3rd-century date. It was noted that the lower fill was damp, and some dark organic material appeared to be present. At the south end of the trench, F13 was an extensive feature containing common flint nodules, and the silt-filled linear feature on its north edge (F12) appeared to be associated with it. These features could represent a large ditch or two ditches, though the flint nodules in F13 could derive from a building.

#### **6.6 Trench 6: summary**

This trench (55 m long) was located on the north-east part of the site. This trench is outside the footprint of the proposed reservoir (Fig 2) and was opened to evaluate this area as a potential site for relocation of the reservoir following the archaeological results from T1-T5. The north-east part of the site is slightly lower-lying than the southern part, and the land flattens out to form the edge of the broad flood-plain of the River Pant. The upper part of the surviving archaeological features in this trench were found to be slightly obscured by the nature of the subsoil, which is a slightly stony silt with rare gravel patches, and lacked the definition of features which were observed cut into the natural on the southern part of the site. Archaeological features appeared as darker areas containing archaeological finds.

There were at least six ditches (F34, F35, F36, F37, F38, F39), and F43 should possibly be included with these. It should be noted that F36 may be two separate ditches. Except for F34, F35 and F42, all the ditches appeared to be aligned approximately north-south. None of the features was examined by excavation, though all contained finds of Roman date in their surfaces. Part of a Late Iron Age rippled pottery bowl (find bag 25) came from F36, and a sherd of Middle Iron Age pottery (find bag 32) was recovered from the trench spoil.

## 6.7 Summary table of contexts

Table 1: summary of contexts by trench number and associated finds.

| Trench | Feature or layer | context type         | comments   | associated finds   | context dated as |
|--------|------------------|----------------------|--|--|------------------|
| T1     | F25              | ditch                |  |  | Roman            |
| T1     | F26              |                      | possibly natural   | Roman tile fragment  |                  |
| T1     | F27              |                      | irregular feature, Roman pottery in surface  | Roman pottery  | Roman            |
| T1     | F28              |                      | possibly natural   |  |                  |
| T1     | F29              |                      | irregular feature, Roman tile in surface   | Roman tile   | Roman            |
| T1     | F30              |                      | linear feature with stony fill, possibly natural   |  |                  |
| T1     | F31              |                      | linear feature with pale brown silt fill, possibly natural   |  |                  |
| T1     | F32              | ditch                | stony dark fill  |  | Roman            |
| T1     | F33              | ditch                | stony dark fill  | Roman pottery  | Roman            |
| T2     | F23              | ditch                | fill is noticeably dark  | Roman tile   | Roman            |
| T2     | F24              | ditch                | fill is noticeably dark  | Roman pottery and tile   | Roman            |
| T3     | L1               | Roman demolition     | Roman tiles and mortar south of wall foundation F1   | building materials: yellow-brown mortar, <i>opus signinum</i> mortar, Roman roof tile and flue tiles (sampled) | Roman            |
| T3     | F1               | wall foundation      | flint nodules in white lime mortar   |  | Roman            |
| T3     | F2               | ditch                | appears to cut demolition layer L1, small section excavated  | Roman pottery, flue tile and roof tile, animal bone  | Roman            |
| T3     | F3               | large feature ?ditch | dark fill with common Roman tile pieces; see also F22 in T4  | Roman tile, Pb object (melted lead)  | Roman            |
| T3     | F6               | pit/post-hole        | located just north of F1, fill contains charcoal   |  |                  |
| T4     | F4               | disturbed ?footing   | linear spread of Roman tile pieces and fragments with some flint nodules, feature located at base of topsoil                         | Roman pottery  | Roman            |
| T4     | F7               | ditch                | possible re-cut on south side of ditch F9, part section excavated  | Roman pottery, tile and animal bone  | Roman            |
| T4     | F8               | ditch                | possible re-cut on north side of ditch F9, part section excavated  | Roman pottery, glass, tile and animal bone   | Roman            |
| T4     | F9               | ditch                | broad ditch, appears to be cut by two possible separate ditch features (F7 & F8) which follow its alignment and may be later re-cuts | Roman pottery  | Roman            |

| Trench | Feature or layer | context type | comments  | associated finds                                    | context dated as |
|--------|------------------|--------------|---|---|------------------|
| T4     | F16              | ?pit         | no finds seen in surface but looked like a real feature                     |   | Roman            |
| T4     | F17              |              | small feature with no visible finds inclusions in surface, possibly natural |   |                  |
| T4     | F18              | ditch        |   |   | Roman            |
| T4     | F19              | pit          |   | Roman pottery and oyster shell                      | Roman            |
| T4     | F20              |              | mixed silty fill with chalk lenses, appeared to be a natural feature        |   |                  |
| T4     | F21              | ditch        |   |   | Roman            |
| T4     | F22              |              | large feature   | Middle Iron Age pottery, Roman pottery, tile        | Roman            |
| T5     | F5               | ditch        | section excavated   | Roman pottery, flue tile and roof tile, animal bone | Roman            |
| T5     | F10              | ditch        | small ditch   |   | Roman            |
| T5     | F11              | ditch        |   | Roman pottery                                       | Roman            |
| T5     | F12              | ?ditch       | linear stone-free area on edge of F13, possibly a separate feature          |   | Roman            |
| T5     | F13              |              | large feature with common flint nodules in fill                             |   | Roman            |
| T5     | F14              |              | probably a natural feature  |   |                  |
| T5     | F15              |              | probably a natural feature  |   |                  |
| T6     | F34              | ditch        |   | animal bone   | Roman            |
| T6     | F35              | ditch        | possibly part of F34  | Roman pottery, tile and animal bone                 | Roman            |
| T6     | F36              | ditch        |   | Roman pottery and tile                              | Roman            |
| T6     | F37              |              | probable linear feature which appeared slightly irregular                   | Roman pottery and tile                              | Roman            |
| T6     | F38              | ditch        |   | Roman pottery and tile                              | Roman            |
| T6     | F39              | ditch        |   | Roman tile  | Roman            |
| T6     | F40              |              | small feature with stony sandy fill, probably natural                       |   |                  |
| T6     | F41              |              | linear feature with stony sandy fill, probably natural                      |   |                  |
| T6     | F42              |              | linear feature with stony sandy fill, probably natural                      |   |                  |
| T6     | F43              |              | large feature, possibly south edge of a ditch                               | Roman pottery                                       | Roman            |
| T6     | F44              | pit          | edges and extent of feature indistinct                                      | Roman pottery                                       | Roman            |

## 7 Finds

- 7.1** The finds are set out as two tables below; Table 2 list finds from archaeological contexts, and Table 3 lists finds recovered from spoil heaps and finds from the area of individual evaluation trenches.
- 7.2** There were two sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery. These were examined by Paul Sealey of Colchester Museums who commented: 'the sherds are typical of Middle Iron Age sand-tempered wares from Essex and East Anglia which contain silver mica in the fabric. Both sherds are of a size which suggests a Middle Iron Age settlement on the site and are probably not displaced away from the settlement by activity such as manure spreading on surrounding fields'.
- 7.3** For the Roman pottery described in Tables 2 and 3, pottery vessel form numbers follow those of the Camulodunum (Cam) Roman pottery type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947 and Hull 1958). Pottery fabrics follow those of *CAR 10*. Fabric descriptions for the fabric codes used in this report are as follows:
- AJ amphora, Dressel 20
  - BA plain samian
  - CZ Colchester and other red colour-coated wares
  - EA Nene Valley colour-coated ware
  - DJ coarse oxidised and related wares
  - DZ fine oxidised wares
  - GA BB1: black-burnished ware category 1
  - GB BB2: black-burnished ware category 2
  - GTW Late Iron Age grog-tempered ware
  - GX other coarse wares, principally locally-produced grey wares
  - HD shell-tempered and calcite-gritted wares
  - HZ large storage jars and other vessels in heavily-tempered grey wares
  - KX black-burnished ware (BB2) types in pale grey ware
  - TP Hadham mortaria (fine orange fabric)
  - TZ Colchester mortaria and mortaria imported from the Continent.

**Table 2: finds from numbered contexts.**

| Feature or layer | Trench | find bag | context                           | find type                   | pot fabrics | pieces | wt (g) | date            |
|------------------|--------|----------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|--------|--------|-----------------|
| L1               | T3     | 16       | also some us                      | <i>opus signinum</i> mortar |             | 3      | 1,500  | Roman           |
| L1               | T3     | 16       | also some U/S                     | yellow-brown mortar         |             | 2      | 350    | Roman           |
| L1               | T3     | 16       | also some U/S                     | Roman flue tile             |             | 7      | 850    | Roman           |
| L1               | T3     | 16       | also some U/S                     | Roman roof tile             |             | 4      | 625    | Roman           |
| L1               | T3     | 16       | also some U/S                     | Roman pot                   | CZ          | 1      | 5      | 2nd-3rd century |
| L1               | T3     | 16       | also some U/S                     | Roman pot                   | GX          | 14     | 225    | Roman           |
| F2               | T3     | 3        | fill                              | Roman pot                   | AJ?         | 1      | 30     | 1st-2nd century |
| F2               | T3     | 3        | fill                              | Roman pot                   | GX          | 9      | 90     | Roman           |
| F2               | T3     | 3        | fill                              | Roman tile                  |             | 2      | 20     | Roman           |
| F2               | T3     | 3        | fill                              | animal bone                 |             | 1      | 5      |                 |
| F3               | T3     | 35       | metal-detected in feature surface | lead (Pb) melted piece      |             | 1      | 45     |                 |

| Feature or layer | Trench | find bag | context         | find type                         | pot fabrics | pieces         | wt (g) | date                     |
|------------------|--------|----------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|----------------|--------|--------------------------|
| F4               | T4     | 4        | feature surface | Roman pot                         | KX          | 1              | 40     | 2nd-3rd+ century         |
| F5               | T5     | 7        | ditch fill      | Roman roof tile                   |             | 14             | 2,500  | Roman                    |
| F5               | T5     | 7        | ditch fill      | Roman flue tile                   |             | 1              | 60     | Roman                    |
| F5               | T5     | 7        | ditch fill      | animal bone, piece with cut marks |             | quantity       | 500    |                          |
| F5               | T5     | 7        | ditch fill      | Roman pottery                     | CZ          | 1              | 3      | 2nd-3rd century          |
| F5               | T5     | 7        | ditch fill      | Roman pottery (Cam 304)           | GA          | 1              | 5      | later 2nd-3rd century    |
| F5               | T5     | 7        | ditch fill      | Roman pottery                     | GX          | 11             | 40     | Roman                    |
| F5               | T5     | 7        | ditch fill      | oyster shell                      |             | 1              | 1      |                          |
| F5               | T5     | 7        | ditch fill      | Fe nail                           |             | 1              | 10     |                          |
| F5               | T5     | 7        | ditch fill      | stone (sandstone piece)           |             | 1              | 250    |                          |
| F5               | T5     | 7        | ditch fill      | burnt flint                       |             | 1              | 25     | ?prehistoric             |
| F5               | T5     | 37       | U/S             | Roman pot                         | HZ          | 1              | 200    | 1st-2nd/3rd century      |
| F5               | T5     | 37       | U/S             | Roman pot                         | GX          | 4              | 45     | Roman                    |
| F7               | T4     | 5        | ditch fill      | Roman tile                        |             | 4              | 750    | Roman                    |
| F7               | T4     | 5        | ditch fill      | animal bone                       |             | small quantity | 350    |                          |
| F7               | T4     | 5        | ditch fill      | Roman pot                         | HD          | 7              | 300    | ?1st-earlier 2nd century |
| F7               | T4     | 5        | ditch fill      | Roman pot                         | GX          | 5              | 200    | 2nd-3rd century          |
| F7               | T4     | 5        | ditch fill      | Roman pot (Cam 40A)               | GB          | 1              | 30     | 2nd-3rd century          |
| F7               | T4     | 5        | ditch fill      | oyster shell                      |             | 1              | 1      |                          |
| F7               | T4     | 12       |                 | Roman pot                         | KX          | 1              | 5      | 2nd-3rd+ century         |
| F8               | T4     | 6        | ditch fill      | Roman tile                        |             | 3              | 350    | Roman                    |
| F8               | T4     | 6        | ditch fill      | animal bone                       |             | small quantity | 125    |                          |
| F8               | T4     | 6        | ditch fill      | Roman pot (Cam 279C)              | GA          | 1              | 5      | later 3rd-4th century    |
| F8               | T4     | 6        | ditch fill      | Roman pot (Cam 40A)               | KX          | 2              | 50     | 2nd-4th century          |
| F8               | T4     | 6        | ditch fill      | Roman pot                         | DJ          | 1              | 5      | 1st-2nd/3rd century      |
| F8               | T4     | 6        | ditch fill      | Roman pot                         | GX          | 1              | 1      | Roman                    |
| F8               | T4     | 6        | ditch fill      | oyster shell                      |             | 1              | 2      |                          |
| F8               | T4     | 6        | ditch fill      | glass – blue-green                |             | 1              | 2      | Roman                    |
| F9               | T4     | 11       |                 | Roman pot                         | GX          | 2              | 55     | Roman ?3rd-4th century   |
| F11              | T5     | 8        | feature surface | Roman pot                         | GX          | 3              | 25     | Roman                    |
| F19              | T4     | 10       |                 | Roman pot                         | GX          | 1              | 10     | ?1st-early 2nd century   |

| Feature or layer | Trench | find bag | context         | find type                                  | pot fabrics | pieces         | wt (g) | date                     |
|------------------|--------|----------|-----------------|--|-------------|----------------|--------|--------------------------|
| F19              | T4     | 10       |                 | oyster shell                               |             | 1              | 2      |                          |
| F22              | T4     | 9        | feature surface | Roman tile                                 |             | 4              | 450    | Roman                    |
| F22              | T4     | 9        | feature surface | Roman pot                                  | HZ          | 3              | 90     | 1st-2nd/3rd century      |
| F22              | T4     | 9        | feature surface | Roman pot (rim)                            | GTW         | 1              | 5      | Late Iron Age            |
| F22              | T4     | 9        | feature surface | pot, thick sandy sherd                     |             | 1              | 20     | Middle Iron Age          |
| F22              | T4     | 9        | feature surface | stone, micaceous sandstone cobble (broken) |             | 1              | 350    |                          |
| F23              | T2     | 13       |                 | Roman tile                                 |             | 3              | 600    | Roman                    |
| F24              |        | 14       |                 | Roman tile                                 |             | 2              | 125    | Roman                    |
| F24              |        | 14       |                 | Roman pot                                  | GX          | 2              | 25     | Roman                    |
| F24              |        | 14       |                 | Roman pot                                  | GA          | 1              | 10     | late 2nd-3rd/4th century |
| F26              | T1     | 17       |                 | Roman tile                                 |             | 4              | 45     | Roman                    |
| F27              | T1     | 18       | feature surface | Roman pot                                  | GX          | 1              | 20     | Roman                    |
| F29              | T1     | 20       | feature surface | Roman tile                                 |             | 1              | 200    | Roman                    |
| F32              | T1     | 21       | feature surface | Roman pot                                  | GX          | 1              | 35     | Roman ?1st-2nd century   |
| F32              | T1     | 21       | feature surface | Roman tile                                 |             | 2              | 50     | Roman                    |
| F33              | T1     | 22       | feature surface | Roman tile                                 |             | 2              | 75     | Roman                    |
| F33              | T1     | 22       | feature surface | Roman pot (small sherds)                   | GX          | 6              | 10     | Roman                    |
| F34              | T6     | 23       | feature surface | animal bone                                |             | small quantity | 120    |                          |
| F35              | T6     | 24       | feature surface | Roman tile                                 |             | 4              | 375    | Roman                    |
| F35              | T6     | 24       | feature surface | animal bone                                |             | small quantity | 120    |                          |
| F35              | T6     | 24       | feature surface | Roman pot                                  | GX          | 1              | 10     | Roman                    |
| F35              | T6     | 24       | feature surface | oyster shell                               |             | 1              | 2      |                          |
| F36              | T6     | 25       | feature surface | LIA pot, (rippled bowl)                    | GTW         | 1              | 20     | Late Iron Age            |
| F36              | T6     | 25       | feature surface | Roman roof tile                            |             | 4              | 1,200  | Roman                    |
| F36              | T6     | 25       | feature surface | Roman brick/tile                           |             | 8              | 580    | Roman                    |
| F36              | T6     | 26       | feature surface | Roman roof tile                            |             | 10             | 300    | Roman                    |
| F36              | T6     | 26       | feature surface | Roman pot                                  | HZ          | 2              | 90     | 1st-2nd/3rd century      |
| F36              | T6     | 26       | feature surface | Roman pot (mortaria flange)                | TZ          | 3              | 10     | 1st-2nd/3rd century      |

| Feature or layer | Trench | find bag | context         | find type                 | pot fabrics | pieces       | wt (g) | date                            |
|------------------|--------|----------|-----------------|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------|---------------------------------|
| F36              | T6     | 26       | feature surface | Roman pot (large jar rim) | GX          | 1            | 55     | Roman                           |
| F37              | T6     | 27       | feature surface | Roman tile                |             | 2            | 75     | Roman                           |
| F37              | T6     | 27       | feature surface | Roman pot                 | GX          | 2            | 25     | Roman                           |
| F37              | T6     | 27       | feature surface | Roman pot                 | DJ          | 2            | 10     | 1st-2nd/3rd century             |
| F37              | T6     | 27       | feature surface | Roman pot                 | HZ          | 4            | 35     | 1st-2nd/3rd century             |
| F38              | T6     | 29       | feature surface | Roman tile                |             | 3            | 150    | Roman                           |
| F38              | T6     | 29       | feature surface | Roman pot                 | GX          | 1            | 10     | Roman                           |
| F38              | T6     | 29       | feature surface | animal bone               |             | 3            | 15     |                                 |
| F39              | T6     | 30       | feature surface | Roman tile                |             | 1 + fragment | 200    | Roman                           |
| F43              | T6     | 31       | feature surface | fired clay ?tile/daub     |             | 1            | 5      |                                 |
| F44              | T6     | 28       | feature surface | Roman tile                |             | 1            | 25     | Roman                           |
| F44              | T6     | 28       | feature surface | Roman pot (Cam 268 jar)   | GX          | 3            | 20     | mid 2nd-early 4th century       |
| F44              | T6     | 28       | feature surface | Roman pot                 | DZ or CZ    | 3            | 2      | Roman 1st - 2nd/2nd-3rd century |

**Table 3: unstratified collected finds from spoil and proximity of numbered evaluation trenches.**

| Trench | find bag | context         | find type  | pot fabrics | pieces | wt (g) | date                            |
|--------|----------|-----------------|--|-------------|--------|--------|---------------------------------|
| T1     | 19       | U/S             | Roman tile   |             | 4      | 250    | Roman                           |
| T1     | 19       | U/S             | Roman pot  | GX          | 1      | 5      | Roman                           |
| T2     | 44       | U/S             | Roman pot  | GX          | 7      | 75     | Roman                           |
| T3     |          | U/S (south end) | yellow-brown mortar                                    |             | 2      | 300    | Roman                           |
| T3     | 2        | U/S (south end) | Roman flue tile  |             | 5      | 530    | Roman                           |
| T3     | 2        | U/S (south end) | Roman tile   |             | 2      | 350    | Roman                           |
| T3     | 2        | U/S (south end) | Roman pottery  | GA          | 1      | 60     | 2nd-4th?/ later 3rd-4th century |
| T3     | 2        | U/S (south end) | Roman pottery (Cam 305 bowl)                           | GX          | 2      | 40     | later 3rd-4th century           |
| T3     | 2        | U/S (south end) | metal or stone with black vitreous deposit on one side |             | 1      | 110    |                                 |
| T3     | 2        | U/S (south end) | stone, buff sandstone,                                 |             | 1      | 850    |                                 |

| Trench | find bag | context         | find type                                       | pot fabrics | pieces      | wt (g) | date                      |
|--------|----------|-----------------|---|-------------|-------------|--------|---------------------------|
|        |          |                 | with mortared surface                           |             |             |        |                           |
| T3     | 22       | U/S (south end) | <i>opus signinum</i> mortar                     |             | 2           | 300    | Roman                     |
| T3     | 36       | U/S             | Roman roof tile                                 |             | 4           | 180    | Roman                     |
| T3     | 36       | U/S             | Roman pottery (rim)                             | GX          | 1           | 20     | Roman                     |
| T3     | 36       | U/S             | brick with breather holes                       |             | 2 (joining) | 110    | ?post-Roman               |
| T3     | 38       | U/S             | Roman flue tile                                 |             | 1           | 75     | Roman                     |
| T3     | 38       | U/S             | animal bone                                     |             | 3           | 170    |                           |
| T3     | 38       | U/S             | Roman pot (large storage jar + other sherds)    | GX          | 8           | 300    | Roman 1st-2nd/3rd century |
| T3     | 38       | U/S             | Roman pot                                       | HZ          | 1           | 15     | 1st-2nd/3rd century       |
| T3     | 41       | U/S             | Roman pot                                       | GX          | 1           | 20     | probably 2nd+ century     |
| T3     | 41       | U/S             | Roman pot                                       | AJ          | 1           | 20     | 1st-2nd century           |
| T4     | 1        | U/S             | Roman pot (large storage jar rim)               | GX          | 2           | 90     | Roman 1st-2nd/3rd century |
| T4     | 15       | U/S             | Roman flue tile                                 |             | 1           | 130    | Roman                     |
| T4     | 15       | U/S             | Roman tile <i>tessera</i> cube                  |             | 1           | 45     | Roman                     |
| T4     | 15       | U/S             | Roman tile                                      |             | 1           | 70     | Roman                     |
| T4     | 15       | U/S             | Roman pot                                       | GX          | 7           | 100    | probably 2nd + century    |
| T4     | 15       | U/S             | Roman pot (Cam 408-410)                         | EA          | 1           | 10     | mid-late 3rd-4th century  |
| T4     | 33       | U/S             | Roman pot                                       | BA          | 1           | 5      | 2nd-early 3rd century     |
| T4     | 39       | U/S             | Roman tile ? <i>tessera</i> cube                |             | 1           | 20     | Roman                     |
| T4     | 39       | U/S             | Roman pot (mortaria)                            | TP          | 1           | 20     | late 3rd-4th century      |
| T4     | 39       | U/S             | Roman pot                                       | GX          | 1           | 35     | 2nd+ century              |
| T4     | 40       | U/S             | Roman pot (Cam 305)                             | KX          | 1           | 10     | later 3rd-4th century     |
| T4     | 40       | U/S             | Roman pot                                       | GX          | 1           | 10     | Roman                     |
| T4     | 42       | U/S             | Roman flue tile                                 |             | 6           | 850    | Roman                     |
| T4     | 42       | U/S             | Roman tile                                      |             | 5           | 700    | Roman                     |
| T4     | 42       | U/S             | Roman pot (Cam 305)                             | GX          | 8           | 230    | later 3rd-4th century     |
| T4     | 42       | U/S             | Roman pot (Cam 37)                              | KX          | 1           | 10     | 2nd-3rd century           |
| T4     | 42       | U/S             | worked flint (accidentally broken flint flakes) |             | 3           | 60     |                           |

| Trench | find bag | context | find type                   | pot fabrics | pieces | wt (g) | date                   |
|--------|----------|---------|-----------------------------|-------------|--------|--------|------------------------|
| T4     | 43       | U/S     | Roman flue tile             |             | 3      | 625    | Roman                  |
| T4     | 43       | U/S     | Roman tile                  |             | 2      | 1,000  | Roman                  |
| T4     | 43       | U/S     | Roman pot                   | HD          | 1      | 20     | 1st-early 2nd? century |
| T4     | 43       | U/S     | Roman pot (Cam 108)         | GX          | 2      | 20     | 1st-early 2nd century  |
| T5     | 34       | U/S     | Roman pot                   | HZ          | 2      | 200    | 1st-2nd/3rd century    |
| T6     | 32       | U/S     | Roman tile                  |             | 1      | 270    | Roman                  |
| T6     | 32       | U/S     | Roman pot (Cam 40B)         | GB          | 1      | 25     | 2nd-3rd century        |
| T6     | 32       | U/S     | pot                         |             | 1      | 15     | Middle Iron Age        |
| T6     | 32       | U/S     | Roman pot                   | HZ          | 1      | 35     | 1st-2nd/3rd century    |
| T6     | 32       | U/S     | Roman pot (mortaria flange) | TE          | 1      | 30     | later 3rd-4th century  |

## 8 Discussion

Prior to the evaluation, there was no record of archaeological finds from the site, though a very small number of Roman finds and features were recorded for the surrounding area (Fig 1). The discovery of a Roman settlement site with evidence of preceding Middle and Late Iron Age occupation was quite unexpected.

Evidence of prehistoric (pre-Roman) activity consists of two sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery from T4 and T6, and two sherds of Late Iron Age grog-tempered ware also from T4 and T6. These sherds were unstratified or were residual in later (Roman) features. Though the site produced only a very small quantity of prehistoric pottery, it should be noted that almost no excavation of features took place, and there is little doubt that these sherds derive from Middle and Late Iron Age settlement on the site. Together with the Roman finds, these sherds indicate the possibility of continuity of occupation here from the Middle Iron Age through to the Roman period. Also possibly of prehistoric date are one piece of burnt flint from the fill of the ditch F5 and a few unstratified struck flint flakes. However, the flint flakes recovered consist of heavily-struck large flakes with cortex on one side. Such pieces are probably from accidentally broken flint nodules and not from prehistoric flint-working on the site.

The Roman occupation of the site is the period most evidenced by the features and finds, and Roman finds were associated with almost all of the features observed.

The Roman wall foundation of mortared flint nodules (F1) and the spread of demolition material (L1) at the south end of T3 demonstrate clearly the remains of a Roman building on this part of the site. That much of the flue tile appeared to be concentrated around the area of the wall foundation F1 indicates a masonry structure incorporating a heated room or rooms. The spread of Roman demolition material (L1) immediately south of F1 also incorporated flue tiles as well as roof tile, Roman brick (possibly fragments of *pilae* tiles from a hypocaust), and pink-coloured *opus signinum* mortar as well as pale-brown lime mortar. It can be noted that *opus signinum* mortar is used in areas where a good-quality mortar (water-, wear- and weather-resistant) is required. Here this probably represents either the remains of a mortar floor or the more general use of water-resistant mortar in a small bath-building or bath suite. That the spread of Roman demolition material L1 survives on the site also suggests a lowered area which this demolition is filling, possibly the base of a hypocaust.

The area occupied by this building is not known although a few observations can be made. F1 is almost certainly part of the north wall of the building, running east-west, and it probably extended west of T3, being cut away here by the ditch F2. This idea is supported by the extent of the demolition layer L1 which would appear to require F1 to have originally extended further west. The mortared footings did not extend to T4.

The main concentration of Roman tiles extends across the south-east corner of the site well beyond the immediate area of the wall foundation F1. While no other clear structural remains were located, a narrow spread of flint nodules and Roman tile fragments (F4) in T4 could represent a disturbed foundation for a wall line running approximately east-west. In support of this interpretation, it can be noted that, while in all the trenches the occurrence of ditches was very common, to the south of F4 there was no sign of any archaeological activity other than the spread of Roman building material in the topsoil. This absence of features could indicate a reserved area, either part of a compound or the site of a former building.

Overall, the spread of Roman building material and the structural remains observed suggest a heated room or rooms possibly associated with one or more extensive timber building(s). Apart from the spread of Roman demolition material L1 which suggests that there is a surface below it, there were no indications of any surviving floor levels. A very few tile *tessera* cubes from the area of T4 and T5 indicate that somewhere, associated with the Roman building(s), there had been areas of tessellated floor. A possible parallel for the type of building or buildings occupying this part of the site could be the Roman farm at Great Holts Farm, Boreham, near Chelmsford in Essex (EAA 105). Here a small bath suite with stone foundations and hypocausted rooms formed part of a complex with two timber-built barn-like buildings which it adjoined (EAA 105, figs 37, 26 & 34). The aisled barn-like buildings there would probably have had the dual function of dwelling and agricultural use (EAA 105, 220-21).

Around the area occupied by the Roman building(s), there are a large number of ditches. These range from small, probably relatively shallow ditches to what appeared to be much larger features, some of which could be broader quarry hollows. From the small areas of the ditches revealed in the archaeological trenching, none can be easily followed across the site running on the same alignment between trenches. This suggests that, rather than being extensive field ditches, they turned or joined other ditches forming a number of compounds. In this respect, it can be noted that many of the ditches in each trench followed a similar alignment. For example, most of the ditches on the north of the site (T6) are aligned north-south, those on the east (T4 & T5) are aligned north-west to south-east, and those on the west (T1 & T2) are aligned north-east to south-west. While this suggests a continuity within the ordering of the landscape, the number and density of ditches encountered and the proximity of some ditches to each other suggests that these represent a considerable time period over which ditches were being dug. This layout certainly represents a palimpsest resulting from activity certainly spanning the Roman period, while the Middle and Late Iron Age pottery recovered suggests that, overall, the ditches of this palimpsest probably span the Middle Iron Age to late Roman period.

## 9 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive and finds are currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but will be permanently deposited with Braintree Museum under accession code BRNTM 2005.7.

## 10 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Mr Alan O’Leary and Apol Silva & Orchards Ltd for commissioning and funding the work, also Mr Graham Hall of Prime Irrigation Ltd. The fieldwork was carried out by S Benfield and Will Clarke.

## 11 Abbreviations

|       |                                   |
|-------|-----------------------------------|
| CAR   | Colchester Archaeological Report  |
| CAT   | Colchester Archaeological Trust   |
| CM    | Colchester Museums                |
| EAA   | East Anglian Archaeology          |
| ECC   | Essex County Council              |
| EHHER | Essex Historic Environment Record |
| HEM   | Historic Environment Management   |
| IFA   | Institute of Field Archaeologists |
| NGR   | National Grid Reference           |

## 12 References

- |                               |      |  |
|-------------------------------|------|--|
| CAR 10                        | 1999 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 10: Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-1986</i> , by R P Symonds and S Wade, ed by P Bidwell and A Croom                                 |
| CM                            | 2002 | <i>Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i>  |
| CM                            | 2003 | <i>Guidelines for deposition of archaeological archives with Colchester Museums</i>  |
| EAA 3                         | 1997 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>3</b> , ed by J Glazebrook                    |
| EAA 8                         | 2000 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>8</b> , ed by N Brown & J Glazebrook |
| EAA 14                        | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>14</b> , by D Gurney   |
| EAA 105                       | 2003 | <i>Excavations at Greats Holts Farm, Boreham, Essex, 1992-94</i> , Eastern Anglian Archaeology, <b>105</b> , by Mark Germany   |
| Hawkes, C F C,<br>& Hull, M R | 1947 | <i>Camulodunum</i> , RRCSAL, <b>14</b>   |
| Holloway, B                   | 2005 | Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation at Clarendon House, New London Road, Chelmsford, Essex, Colchester (unpublished CAT WSI)                                    |
| Hull, M R                     | 1958 | <i>Roman Colchester</i> , RRCSAL, <b>20</b>  |
| IFA                           | 1999 | <i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological evaluation</i>  |
| IFA                           | 2001 | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>  |
| MAP 2                         | 1991 | <i>Management of archaeological projects</i> , 2nd edition (English Heritage)  |

## 13 Glossary

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| context         | either a feature, layer or a complex of layers/features  |
| Fe              | iron   |
| feature         | an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'                                 |
| flue tile       | tiles, usually in the form of a box-like tube used to conduct hot air as part of Roman hypocaust systems           |
| hypocaust       | a raised floor under which hot air can circulate   |
| Late Iron Age   | period from c 75 BC-43 AD  |
| layer           | distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil  |
| Middle Iron Age | period from c 300 BC-75 AD   |
| modern          | period from the 19th century onwards to the present  |
| mortaria        | Roman bowl which incorporated small stone grits on the inside and which is normally used for mixing in the kitchen |
| natural         | geological deposit undisturbed by human activity   |
| Pb              | lead   |
| <i>pilae</i>    | supports for a Roman hypocaust floor, often stacks of square tiles   |
| post-medieval   | after Henry VIII to around the late 18th century   |
| Roman           | period from AD 43 to c AD 410  |
| U/S             | unstratified (without a clear archaeological context)  |

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### Distribution list:

Alan O'Leary, Petches Yew Farm, Finchingfield, Braintree, Essex  
Grahame Hall, Prime Irrigation Ltd, Darsham, Saxmundham, Suffolk  
Vanessa Clarke, HEM group, Essex County Council  
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



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Date: 19.07.05



**Plate 2 T3: Roman wall foundation F1, view south-east.**



**Plate 3 T3: Roman demolition L1, south of Roman foundation F1 and cut by ditch F2 to left, with F3 in background, view north-east.**



**Plate 4 Possible wall foundation (F4 in T4) with T5 in background, view east.**



**Plate 5 T4: possible wall foundation F4, view west.**



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Fig 1 Site location and surrounding archaeology.



Fig 2 Position of evaluation trenches in relation to the location of the proposed reservoir excavation footprint (toned).

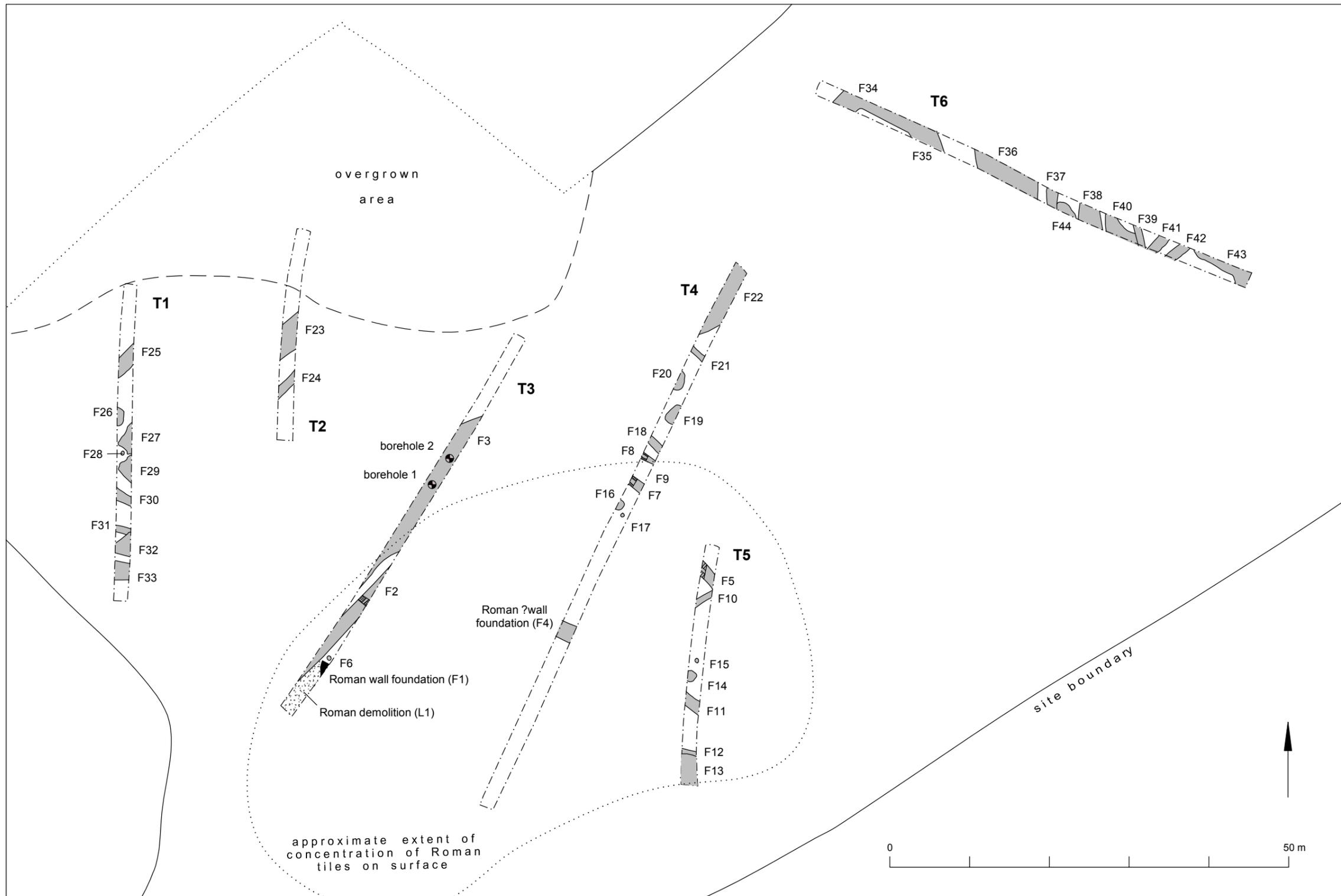


Fig 3 Plan of evaluation trenches and features.

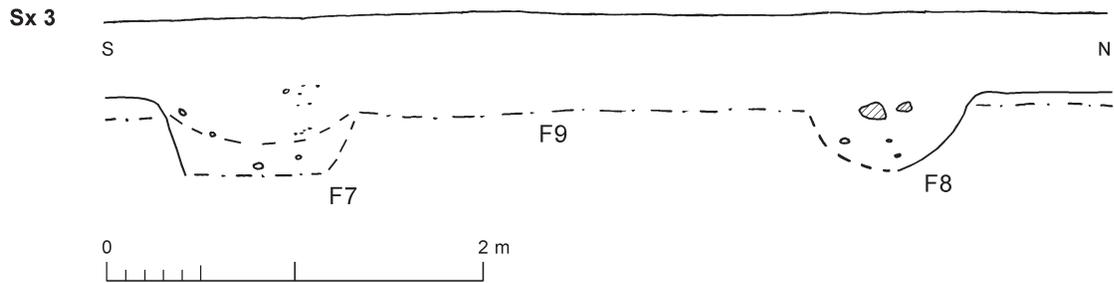
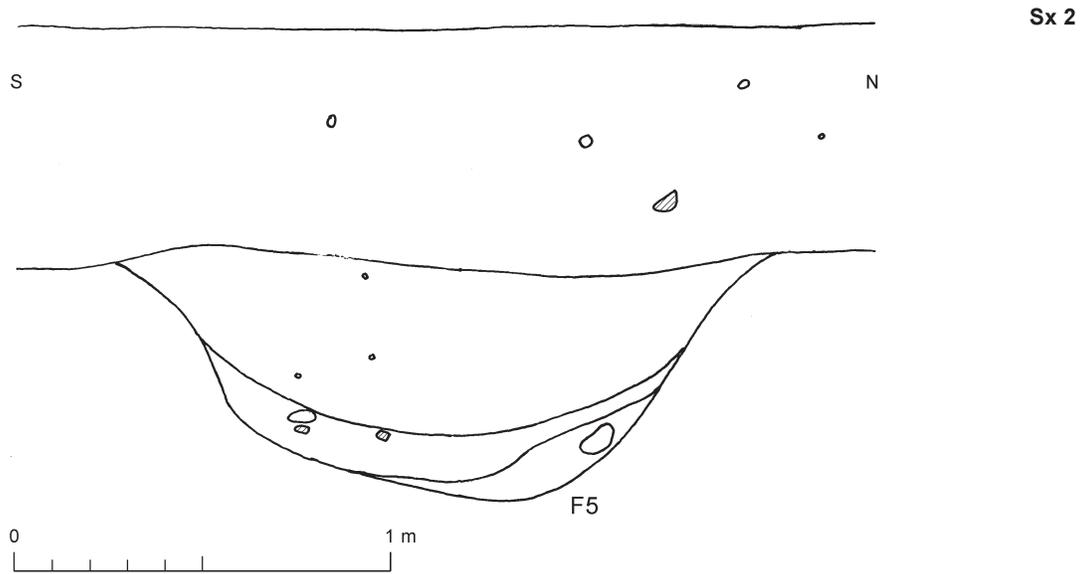
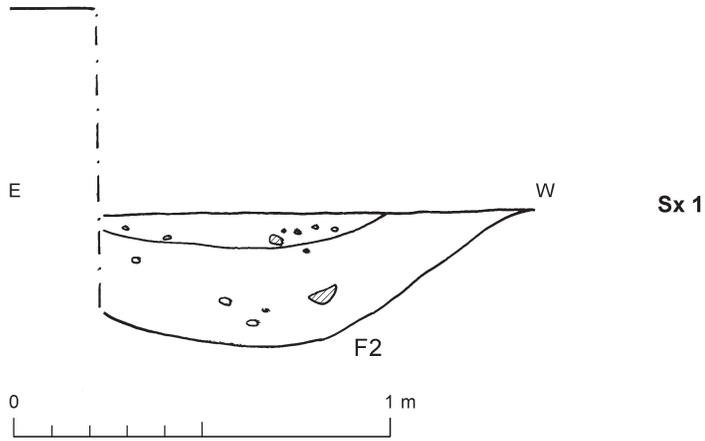


Fig 4 Sections.

 = Roman tile

**Essex Historic Environment Record/  
Essex Archaeology and History**

**Summary sheet**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Site address:</b> Kell Field, Petches Yew Farm, Finchingfield, Essex  |  |
| <b>Parish:</b> Finchingfield   | <b>District:</b> Braintree   |
| <b>NGR:</b> TL 7006 3060   | <b>Site code:</b> ECC site code FFHH05   |
| <b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation  | <b>Site director/group:</b><br>Colchester Archaeological Trust   |
| <b>Date of work:</b> 27 June-4th July 2005   | <b>Size of area investigated:</b><br>0.825 hectares (reservoir footprint) – approx 4% covered by evaluation trenches (plus 1 further trench) |
| <b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b><br>Braintree Museum<br>(accession code BRNTM 2005.7)   | <b>Funding source:</b> Developer   |
| <b>Further seasons anticipated?</b><br>Possibly  | <b>Related EHER nos:</b><br>1505, 1506, 6833   |
| <b>Final report:</b>   | CAT Report 329 and summary in <i>EAH</i>   |
| <b>Periods represented:</b> Middle Iron Age, Late Iron Age, Roman  |  |
| <p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b><br/> <i>An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching was carried out on Kell Field, Petches Yew Farm, Finchingfield, Essex in June-July 2005 in response to the planned construction of a reservoir. Initially, five evaluation trenches were machine-excavated within the proposed footprint of the reservoir. Later, a sixth evaluation trench was excavated on another area of the site to evaluate an alternative location for the reservoir. A concentration of Roman flue tiles and roof tiles was observed on the field surface in the south-east part of the site. This proved to be the site of a Roman building with a mortared flint foundation. A spread of Roman demolition material, adjacent to the wall foundation and incorporating flue tiles and opus signinum mortar, may be filling the lowered area of a hypocaust base. The spread of Roman tiles and an absence of archaeological features east of the identified building probably indicates the site of another Roman building although probably of timber construction. A disturbed line of tile and flint nodules within this area could represent a wall line. One or two tile tessera cubes indicate a tessellated floor, though no floor levels were recorded other than the possible hypocaust base. Beyond the area of the Roman building and across the whole site were numerous ditches which suggest a long period of occupation. Only a limited amount of excavation was carried out; however, it is clear that the ditches are primarily of Roman date, and probably most if not all represent compounds around settlement rather than field ditches. Pottery from the ditches, mostly recovered from the surface of the features, spans the Roman period, and sherds of Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age date demonstrate later prehistoric settlement on the site.</i></p> |  |
| <b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> none  |  |
| <b>Author of summary:</b> S Benfield   | <b>Date of summary:</b> July 2005  |